


Northwest

THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE / WWW.LMTRIBUNE.COM

Evergreen election
Ballot full of contentious races boils
down to another day of waiting
> PAGE 3C

INSIDE:
Regional
News: 2C

SECTION

MONDAY
NOVEMBER 1, 2004

BLM asks for planning advice

Region's land users are invited to watch the process

By **ERIC BARKER**
OF THE TRIBUNE

In north central Idaho and southeastern Washington, the Bureau of Land Management often sits in the shadow of the U.S. Forest Service. The agency's Cottonwood field office manages more than 144,000 acres, but that's less than one-tenth of the land its sister agency manages, and its lands are scattered widely be-

tween Moscow and McCall. Despite its small regional land base, the agency grapples with the same big public land issues — managing recreation, preventing the spread of noxious weeds and balancing logging and grazing with preservation. The Cottonwood field office has just begun a three-year process to write a new plan to guide its activities. The agency will hold a series of public meetings beginning this week to ex-

plain the process. Most of the land managed by the BLM's Cottonwood field office is along the Lower Salmon River. But the agency also manages blocks of land near Elk City on Craig Mountain, in the Clearwater Valley and north of McCall. Near Elk City, the agency is managing timber to reduce the threat of large wildfires. Along the Clearwater River the agency oversees boat ramps used by steelhead and salmon anglers. The BLM manages timber and

recreation along lower Lolo Creek, a tributary to the Clearwater River. But the field office is best known for its program governing recreation along the Salmon River beginning at Vinegar Creek and extending down river to its mouth. The BLM also manages the boat ramp at Heller-Bar on the Snake River, an access and take-out point for river trips on both the Snake and Salmon rivers. The stretch of whitewater from

> See **BLM**, Page 6C

BLM: Salmon River stays wild, free

> Continued from PAGE 1C

Hammer Creek near White Bird to Heller Bar on the Snake south of Asotin is one of the most popular with white-water boaters.

The lower Salmon River cuts through a gorge in a series of pool-and-drop rapids that creates thrilling whitewater and leaves white sandy beaches perfect for camping.

"We are one of the last rivers where you don't have to get drawn in a lottery or make reservations, and there is no fee," says Carrie Christman, assistant field manager at Cottonwood. "That is pretty unusual. Right now we are looking at continuing that strategy."

She did say continued and expanding growth in the number of people floating the river could lead to future restrictions.

She and others at the agency are asking people who work and recreate on BLM land to tell them about any is-

sues important to them.

The new plan will cover not only recreation, but the way timber and grassland is managed, measures to prevent and in some cases promote wildfire, and how much access will be provided.

The new plan also will identify river and creek segments that are eligible for inclusion in the national Wild and Scenic River program.

Christman says Lolo Creek could be nominated for inclusion. The lower Salmon River gorge has been a candidate for inclusion for several years, but it has not been acted on by Congress.

"We manage it as if it were," says Christman.

Any river segment deemed eligible for inclusion in the program has to be further studied by the agency to make sure it meets qualifications, and approved by Congress. The program protects rivers from excessive development.

The agency will eventually prepare an environmental im-

Meeting times

Bureau of Land Management open house meetings on future management of lands will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. local time at the following locations:

- Tonight at the Riggins Heritage Center on South Street

- Wednesday at the National Guard Armory on Northeast Street in Grangeville

- Thursday at the Lewiston Community Center in Lewiston

pact statement that looks at the environmental, social and economic effects of its management plan. But before it gets to that point, BLM officials want the public to help shape the plan.

Barker may be contacted at ebarker@lmtribune.com

Eric Barker